Reviewer's report

Title: Incorporating a gender perspective into clinical guidelines: A training course for guideline developers

Version: 1 Date: 23 April 2007

Reviewer: Melissa Brouwers

Reviewer's report:

General

This paper details a training program designed to facilitate consideration of gender in the development of clinical practice guidelines and it provides data on the initial evaluation of the program.

There are two perspectives by which this paper could be reviewed:
• assessment of the training program
• assessment of the program evaluation of the training program

My objective is to speak to both components in this review.

Training Program: The concept of gender in health care research and integration of this perspective in the development of CPGs is an important one; the authors have done a convincing job indicating the merit of this approach. The content of the 5 training modules seems reasonable; however, what is less clear are the training tactics and strategies used in the program. How were they chosen? Why certain tactics and not others? Where is the evidence to support the training process? Box 1 and Appendix 1 suggest lecture formats and assignments, but it is difficult to ascertain whether the delivery of the program was designed to have the most impact and relevance to adult learners. How the tools were used during the course of the training session is not well articulated.

Program Evaluation: The evaluation of the training program was directed toward participants' ratings of the training content, the working program, and the training material. While I appreciate it was a pilot project, I think the program evaluation could have been strengthened by a greater alignment with the objectives and with the inclusion of a pre-post survey. While the ratings were uniformly strong across the three questions, there is no evidence to support that the program changed people's awareness of the issue, competence to systematically think about gender issues – nor did it directly ask if the tools improved participants' ratings on these domains. Interestingly, several of the written comments (which I would argue could be framed into core themes) were in praise of a better understanding of sub-group analysis (methodological perspective and analytic perspective) rather than gender as a sub-group. As the authors suggest, this project was piloted on a very small group of atypical participants – its unclear how these data may generalize to a more heterogeneous and representative group of developers and what to make of the data.

It may be fruitful for the authors to focus on either the training program or the program evaluation as the core element of this manuscript rather than both. In doing so, it would allow them more space to provide the missing detail that would allow a more comprehensive review. I would recommend the training program as the focus with the evaluation as perhaps a small section in the discussion give that the data are extremely preliminary. Alternatively, the authors may wish to package it as a slightly different type of publication rather than as a traditional study.

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Major Compulsory Revisions (that the author must respond to before a decision on publication can be reached)

a) Consider focusing on one of the two elements of the paper to enable a comprehensive story to be told (see comments above).
OR
b) Consider an alternative type of submission that would not follow a traditional study formal.

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Minor Essential Revisions (such as missing labels on figures, or the wrong use of a term, which the author
Discretionary Revisions (which the author can choose to ignore)

What next?: Unable to decide on acceptance or rejection until the authors have responded to the major compulsory revisions

Level of interest: An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: No, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.